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N 50-92

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OPERATIONS
8 June 1970

OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

THE WEEKLY

1. As all of you know, we have during the past three weeks made several changes in the format of the Weekly. Others are to follow. We shall, for example, begin to use a different type face as soon as we can obtain the necessary equipment. In addition, we plan to drop the Prefaces, of which more will be said below. The purpose of these and the other changes to come is twofold: to improve the appearance of the Weekly and to make it more readable. As a by-product, we will gain space. I want it clearly understood, however, that this space is not to be used either to accommodate articles on topics of marginal interest that would not have been tolerated in the old Weekly or to foster hypertrophied treatment of significant topics. Neither individual articles nor all of them together should exceed the length of their equivalents in the old Weekly. Let the Weekly remain lean and muscular, punchy, not paunchy.

2. In considering the various alterations that might be made to improve the Weekly, we have been guided in part by recommendations from within the office. All of us who are involved in producing the Weekly are too close to the problem to be necessarily the best judges of what ought to be done. It is not primarily a journal written for ourselves or for our opposite numbers in other agencies. We have, therefore, sounded out a number of non-intelligence subscribers; and the decisions we have made reflect their views as well as yours.

3. There seems to be a consensus that the Prefaces should be jettisoned, and I propose to do that forthwith. Some of the criticisms leveled against them are instructive. They were faulted on the grounds that they duplicated both the Contents and many of the articles themselves and that they attempted artificially to find some unifying thread

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where none existed upon which to string a variety of snippets. Certain high-level readers, however, found them useful because they included interesting information on subjects either of insufficient weight to justify full treatment in a separate article or about which too little was known to permit such treatment. We can continue to serve these readers by printing brief notes covering matters of this nature when space is available. In addition, when it is possible to produce a genuine article covering truly interrelated regional developments--genuine as distinct from the contrived ones sometimes appearing as Prefaces--we should publish them and will do so regularly. Both the notes and the regional articles should be proposed and discussed at the regular Weekly planning meetings.

4. The next several weeks will be a period of experimentation with the Weekly, during which, through trial and error, I hope to make it a more effective vehicle. In the meantime, here are some remarks on various aspects of the publication for your consideration.

Content The Weekly is a vehicle for both reporting and analysis. The ratio between the two is determined only to some extent by the nature of the topic being treated. I think that our goal should be to increase the proportion of analysis insofar as we can.

Style The purpose of the Weekly is to inform; and its readers, at least the important ones, are busy men with many other matters on their minds. Obviously our goal must be lucidity. This, unfortunately, is not so easy to attain as it would seem to be. From time to time you have had harsh words to say about the Weekly style, "dull" being among the kinder of the criticisms. Some of you have made a conscious effort to dress it up, and I would not want to discourage any sincere effort at improvement. But the results, in general, tend to show how difficult it is to achieve clarity, much less elegance of style. If we have something important to write about--and we do--and if we express ourselves clearly and forcibly--and we can--our readers will not lose interest, and our work will be effective. Some may feel that we should strive for artistry, but artistry is something to which few are born, for which some strive, but to which almost no one attains. Some of our attempts to achieve it through the use of colorful language and imagery have been at best pathetic and at worst absurd.

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Format Contrary to an impression that seems to have gotten about, there is no rigidly prescribed structure for a Weekly article. I do not think that there should be. My main concern in this regard is that the articles be concise, not sprawling and loosely put together.

Graphics Our graphics, like our prose, must inform; otherwise they are without purpose. A graphic is not merely a decoration. It must help tell the story. A graphic that requires close study before its message can be comprehended has defeated its own purpose. The best ones, by illustrating relationships that would take many words to describe, save space and heighten the impact of the articles to which they are attached. Such graphics are usually the product of close and timely teamwork between the analyst and the artist/cartographer. In a publication such as the Weekly the text is obviously paramount. The writer, therefore, must--by thinking from the inception of his articles in terms of graphics and how graphics can supplement and strengthen his text--provide the impetus for their production. The analyst should try harder, I believe, to view the graphics as the reader will view them, to satisfy himself that the graphics do genuinely illuminate the subject in the most effective way. Recently there has been a commendable trend toward simplicity in our graphics, toward smaller, better-placed maps and charts, and toward the use of fewer colors. Photographs should be used more frequently.


Management The Weekly is the product of a cooperative effort normally involving several offices within the DDI and outside it (PSD). By and large, the cooperative relationship has been smooth and the product satisfactory. Since I see no major defect in our way of doing business, I see no need for a major overhaul of the machinery now. As noted above, we can improve our graphics, and this improvement can be secured chiefly by strengthening the working-level relationship between our analysts and the graphics shop. The producing divisions and offices remain responsible for the substantive accuracy of the Weeklies. Production Staff will handle the composition and layout of the new Weekly and prepare and insert the necessary photographs. As regards the latter, I think we should consider the use of color photos if, as in at least some of the Special Reports, there is sufficient time to prepare and print them, and if the classification of the report is not too high. Production

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Staff will continue to be responsible for the editorial quality of the Weeklies. The Chief/Production Staff is editor-in-chief of the Weekly, with authority to adjudicate differences and make final decisions on all matters affecting the content, style, graphics, and general appearance of the publication.

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RICHARD LEHMAN
Director of Current Intelligence

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